

**Testimony of
Kendall F. Wigglin, Chairman
Commission for Educational Technology**

**Concerning House Bill No. 6375
AN ACT CONCERNING REVIEW AND TERMINATION OF CERTAIN BOARDS AND
COMMISSIONS
March 16, 2009**

The Commission for Educational Technology was created by P.A. 00-187 based on recommendations to Governor Rowland on November 26, 1999 by then Lt. Governor Rell following her three-month study on computer readiness in Connecticut's schools and libraries. The Commission has a very far reaching charge. The Commission and its advisory committees have overseen the development of the Connecticut Education Network, administered by the Department of Information Technology; of iCONN, Connecticut's Research Engine and digital library, administered by the Connecticut State Library, and on-line learning administered through the CT Distance Learning Consortium; secured millions of dollars in savings through the federal E-Rate program; the development; fostered a disaster recovery program for colleges and universities in the state; and negotiated and funded online multimedia science materials for Connecticut's middle school students.

Significantly, the Commission continues to serve as the forum and coordinating point for educational technology initiatives, bringing together state agencies, schools, higher education and the business community. It provides a clear voice in state technology planning and policy for K-12, colleges and universities, and public libraries throughout our state.

The work of the Commission impacts all of Connecticut's public schools, libraries and academic institutions in the State.

While it is hard to put firm numbers on the services available through the CEN and other Commission initiatives, some examples are:

- E-Rate bring the state over \$5 million a year for the Education Network
- iCONN represents a cost avoidance for local schools, libraries, and colleges of \$32 million a year
- Internet Access through the CEN represents a cost avoidance of between \$15-75,000 per school district
- CEN funding of online science materials represents a statewide cost avoidance for school districts of over \$2 million annually
- 300 income families have received computers, Internet Access, and training

The members of the Commission serve without additional compensation.

For a few years the Commission had funding for an Executive Director (as authorized in the enabling act), however, there has been no funding to support the Commission for the

past 7 years. The Department of Education generously provides part of one of their employee's time to serve as Executive Director, and the Department of Information Technology has funded a position to develop content for the network.

The Commission has a very large charge and I believe, despite funding challenges, has achieved much. And admittedly, given the resources, could (and should) do more.

So what if the Commission went away? The Commission recently asked itself that question. I think the better question is what opportunities would be lost if the Commission went away? Looking specifically at the Commission's legislative mandate, who would:

- Be the principal educational technology policy advisor for state government;
- Develop, oversee and direct the attainment of state-wide technology goals including:
 - Connecting all institutions of higher education, libraries, public elementary and secondary schools, regional educational service centers and other parties through a state-wide high speed, flexible network that will allow for video, voice and data transmission;
 - Wiring all school classrooms and connecting them to the Internet and to the state-wide high speed network through wired, wireless, or any other digital transmission technology providing high speed connectivity;
 - Providing access for all public schools, public libraries and libraries at institutions of higher education to a core set of on-line full text resources and to the ability to purchase collaboratively for other collections in order to maximize buying power;
 - Ensuring, in cooperation with the State Board of Education, competency in computing skills by the sixth grade for all students;
 - Ensuring competency in specific computing skills and the integration of technology into the curriculum for all public school teachers;
 - Ensuring that institutions of higher education offer a wide range of course and degree programs via the Internet and through other synchronous and asynchronous methods;
- Coordinate the activities of all state agencies, educational institutions and other parties involved in the creation and management of a reliable and secure network that will offer connectivity and allow for the transmission of video, voice and data transmission to every library, school, regional educational service center and institution of higher education;
- Be the liaison between the Governor and the General Assembly and local, state and federal organizations and entities with respect to educational technology matters;

- Develop and maintain a long-range plan and make related recommendations for the coordination of educational technology;
- Measure the availability and usage of Internet access sites available to the public, including, but not limited to, those maintained by state and local government agencies, libraries, schools, institutions of higher education, nonprofit organizations, businesses and other organizations and recommend strategies for reducing the disparities in Internet accessibility and usage across the state and among all potential users;
- Establish methods and procedures to ensure the maximum involvement of members of the public, educators, librarians, representatives of higher education, the legislature and local officials in educational technology matters and organize, as necessary, advisory boards consisting of individuals with expertise in a particular discipline significant to the work of the commission;
- Oversee the preparation and submission of a state-wide application to the federal Universal Service Fund to enhance connectivity to the Connecticut Education Network, maximize participation and grant attainment rates, and reduce overly burdensome administrative requirements which discourage local involvement?

There is also an important role for the Commission as millions of dollars come into the state from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 for Educational Technology and Broadband network development.

At a time when both education and technology are critical to the economic future of Connecticut, it is so very important that the principal state Commission responsible for the promotion and coordination of Connecticut's educational technology efforts be continued, especially since it operates at no added cost to the State. We urge you not to support the elimination of the Commission for Educational Technology.

